

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH
BENNINGTON, VERMONT

*Vermont's Colonial Shrine: Welcoming all to share God's light,
and proclaiming God's embracing love since 1806*

THE REV. KENNETH A. CLARKE, MINISTER
GENE MARIE CALLAHAN, ORGANIST

MARCH 7, 2021
THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

PRELUDE *Ah, Holy Jesus, How Hast Thou Offended*
- Johannes Brahms

OPENING WORDS (responsive)

Lord, be with us this day.

Be with us as we look to find wisdom.

Be with us in the word of love and truth.

Let your peace be in our hearts.

HYMN *Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty* 489
(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

Benjamin Schmolck (1672-1737), the author of this text, was born in Silesia, in Central Europe, and was considered a splendid preacher, poet, and the best-loved hymn writer of his day and wrote nine hundred hymns. He was crowned poet laureate in 1697. The present hymn was included in his *Kirchen-Gefährte* (1732). The English translation of this hymn is by Catherine Winkworth.

OPENING PRAYER (unison)

Merciful God,
we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done,
and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you
with our whole heart and mind and strength.
We have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
In your mercy forgive what we have been,
help us amend what we are,
and direct what we shall be,
so that we may delight in your will
and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your holy name.
Through Christ, our Lord. Amen.

ASSURANCE OF PARDON AND GLORIA PATRI (579)

FIRST LESSON Exodus 20:1-17 p. 58

HYMN *Let Us with a Gladsome Mind* 244

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

John Milton wrote this paraphrase of Psalm 136 in 1623 at the age of 15. He was an English Puritan. While touring France he met the imprisoned Galileo in 1638. Upon returning, he opened a school at Aldersgate. He was Latin Secretary to the Council of State of Oliver Cromwell from 1649-59. By age 44 (1652) he was blind, and he had to dictate his greatest literary works. He wrote 19 Psalm paraphrases. The tune was first published in 1704 with no attributed

SECOND LESSON John 2:13-22 p. 863

SERMON Write Your Own

HYMN *Now Thank We All Our God* 555

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

This hymn, known as the German Te Deum, was written near the close of the Thirty Years' War and is still sung in German churches on New Year's Eve. The text's author was a minister in Ellenburg, Saxony who in 1637 buried half of the 8,000 who died in an epidemic there. The tune first appeared with this text. The composer was a hymnal editor and adapted the harmonization of this tune from Mendelssohn's "Lobgesang".

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS OF THE CHURCH (Visitors are kindly requested to fill out one of the visitor's cards in the pew and put it in the offering plate.)

OFFERING

OFFERTORY *Jesus, Thou My Dearest Life* - J. S. Bach

***DOXOLOGY (592) AND PRAYER OF DEDICATION**

CLOSING PRAYER AND THE LORD'S PRAYER (debts/debtors) p. 16

HYMN *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing* 356

(LYRICS REPRINTED AT THE END OF THE ORDER OF SERVICE)

This text was written by Robert Robinson (1735-1790) about 1758 and was included in *A Collection of Hymns Used by the Church of Christ in Angel-Alley, Bishopsgate* (1759). It was later included with the tune NETTLETON in John Wyeth's *Repository of Sacred Music, Part Second* (1813).

BENEDICTION

POSTLUDE *Abide With Us, Our Savior*
- Johann Gottfried Walther

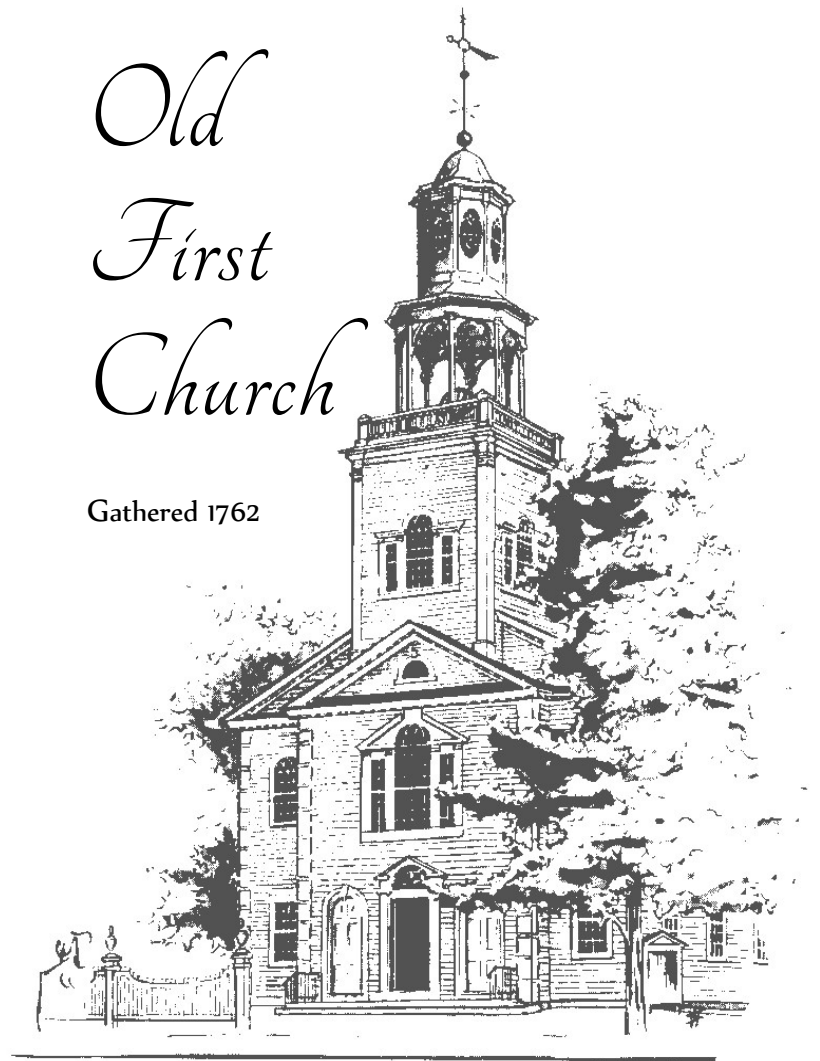
Worship and life at Old First is changing in response to the need to reduce activity as we work to get through the challenge of the COVID-19 presence in our life. Our prayers and thoughts go to everyone immediately affected and thanks go to all people who work to provide care and supply our needs in this time. An audio version of our weekly worship services can be found on the church's website by clicking on the "Worship" tab and selecting "Worship Here and Now". Or simply paste the following into your computer's browser at the top of the page: <http://oldfirstchurchbenn.org/worship/worship-here-and-now/>

If this link appears in blue on the device you are using to read this, you can also just "click on the link" and you will be there! The church office has been temporarily moved to the home of our office administrator. Please use email, phone or U.S. Mail for correspondence.

If you are interested in discussing matters of faith and want to inquire about Christian membership in the church, please contact Rev. Clarke. We welcome the chance to have you join us in our historic, but active-in-the-world, community of faith!

Old First Church

Gathered 1762



FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

(OLD FIRST CHURCH)

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Open Now Thy Gates of Beauty

Open now thy gates of beauty,
Zion, let me enter there,
where my soul in joyful duty
waits for God who answers prayer;
O how blessed is this place,
filled with solace, light, and grace.

Gracious God, I come before Thee,
come Thou also down me;
where we find Thee and adore Thee,
there a heaven on earth must be;
To my heart O enter Thou,
let it be Thy temple now.

Speak, O Lord, and I will hear Thee,
let thy will be done indeed;
may I undisturbed draw near Thee,
while Thou dost Thy people feed.
Here of life the fountain flows,
here is balm for all our woes.

Let Us with a Gladsome Mind

Let us, with a gladsome mind
praise the Lord, who is so kind:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

God, with all-commanding might,
filled the new-made world with light:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

All things living God does feed,
with full measure meets their need:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

Let us with a gladsome mind
praise the Lord who is so kind:
for God's mercies shall endure,
ever faithful, ever sure.

Now Thank We All Our God

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| 1). Now thank we all our God
With heart and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom this world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers' arms,
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today. | 2). O may this bounteous God
Through all our life be near us,
With ever joyful hearts
And blessed peace to cheer us;
And keep us in God's grace,
And guide us when perplexed,
And free us from all ills
In this world and the next. |
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- 3). All praise and thanks to God,
Who reigns in highest heaven,
To Father and to Son
And Spirit now be given.
The one eternal God,
Whom heaven and earth adore,
The God who was, and is,
And shall be ever more.

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

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| 1). Come, Thou Fount of every blessing,
tune my heart to sing Thy grace;
streams of mercy, never ceasing,
call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet,
sung by flaming tongues above;
praise the mount! I'm fixed upon it,
mount of God's unchanging love! | 2). Here I raise my Ebenezer,
hither by Thy help I'm come;
and I hope, by Thy good pleasure,
safely to arrive at home.
Jesus sought me when a stranger,
wandering from the fold of God;
He, to rescue me from danger,
Interposed His precious blood. |
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- 3). O to grace how great a debtor
daily I'm constrained to be!
Let that grace now, like a fetter,
bind my wandering heart to Thee:
prone to wander, Lord, I feel it,
prone to leave the God I love;
here's my heart, O take and seal it;
seal it for Thy courts above.

EXODUS 20:1-17

Then God spoke all these words: I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; you shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments. You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name. Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work. But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

JOHN 2:13-22

The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. He told those who were selling the doves, "Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!" His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me." The Jews then said to him, "What sign can you show us for doing this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews then said, "This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.